

Unit -1 Post Colonial South Asian States and its Political Process

(a) India

The legacy of the national movement resulted in the formation of a popular democratic, sovereign, multi-class 'national state' after 1947. A fundamental legacy of the national movement was anti-imperialism and maintenance of national sovereignty. The constitutional structure established in 1950 encompassed the demands of diversity as well as the requirements of unity. It provided for a federal structure with a strong centre but also a great deal of autonomy for the states. Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders saw economic development as essential for national consolidation. The government set up a Planning Commission and took active measures for planned economic development. The Constitution laid the basis for reduction of social disparity by putting an end to any discrimination on grounds of religion, caste or sex. Independent India's foreign policy served as another unifying force. The policy of non-alignment and anti-colonialism and Nehru's growing stature as a world figure contributed to a sense of national pride in India among all sections of people all over the country and irrespective of their political alignment. Non-alignment enabled India to develop economic ties with blocs led by USA and USSR. She received capital, technology and food from USA and Western countries and built her public sector industries with the assistance of Soviet Union. However Nehru's policy tilted in favour of the Soviet UN rather than with USA.

Jawaharlal Nehru died on 27 May 1964. Nehru grappled with the issues of social and economic reconstruction of the country marked by poverty and illiteracy. Though it appeared that Nehru was grooming his daughter Indira

Gandhi as his successor, he had denied any such intention, and the Congress instead chose Lal Bahadur Shastri as India's second Prime Minister. During 1965 Shastri had to confront a series of crisis. Language issue vitiated the atmosphere as the Constituent Assembly had determined to introduce Hindi as the official language of the new India. There was a sea of protest in Tamil Nadu where DMK and C. Rajagopalachari demanded the constitution be amended and English be made the official language of India. The year 1965 also witnessed the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan. On 10th January 1966, Shastri died of a sudden heart attack at Tashkent. Indira Gandhi who succeeded him had to deal with a grave economic crisis. However years later with green revolution agriculture production increased, The 1967 election inaugurated an era of short-lived coalition governments and politics of defection. Political instability led to the imposition of President's rule and even mid term polls. During the period of three years from 1967-1970, Bihar had seven governments, UP four, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and West Bengal three each and Kerala two, with a total of eight spells of President's Rule in the seven states. As the struggle among the Congress party itself intensified, Mrs Gandhi dominantly consolidated her position in the party.

The 1971 election marked a distinct Indira Raj. In the meantime JP movement had started from Bihar and was widely supported by non-left political parties. A sudden twist to Indian politics was given by a Allahabad High Court decision on 12 June 1975 invalidating Mrs Gandhi 1971 elections owing to corrupt practices. In spite of the opposition protest, she did not relent. Instead on 26th June 1975. Mrs Gandhi persuaded Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to declare an emergency in the country Mrs Gandhi announced on 1st July 1975, her Twenty Point Programme. In the hope of legitimising her emergency regime, Mrs Gandhi unexpectedly called elections to be held in March 1977. Both she and her son Sanjay lost their Lok Sabha seats as most of their followers. Moraji

Desai headed the Janata Party government. The bickering among the party leaders took an acute form and Charan Singh withdrew support to the government. In January 1980, India's seventh general elections returned Indira Gandhi with a massive mandate. On 31st October 1984, Mrs Gandhi herself was shot dead by her two Sikh security men, as a revenge for her Operation Bluestar in Golden Temple.

Mrs Gandhi was succeeded by her son Rajiv Gandhi who tried to revitalise the Congress Party organizations. Despite his innovations, his regime was embroiled in lot of controversies. Rajiv's intervention into the ethnic politics of Srilanka proved to be disastrous. Bofors scandal created an uproar in the Parliament. With the general elections of 1989, it became apparent that Congress could no longer win majority support, and an era of coalition politics began. V.P.Singh became the Prime Minister. The announcement to implement the Mandal Commission later led to the fall of his government. BJP and the VHP in the meanwhile pushed a demand to build a Ram temple at the precise site of Babri Masjid, a 1528 Mughal mosque in Ayodhya. During the period Rajiv Gandhi in an election meeting in Sriperumbudur, 40km from Madras, was killed in a suicidal attack by LTTE militants. Riding on sympathy wave, Congress headed by Narsimha Rao with support from AIIDMK, the Muslim League and the CPI(M) formed the government. The initial impetus for the economic reforms came as a result of an acute balance of payments crisis in mid -1991, making it necessary to seek an IMF loan and accept certain terms of a stabilisation and structural adjustment programme. The gate for economic reforms was opened. An effort was made to free the economy from stifling internal controls and to integrate it with the global economic system. Elections held in 1996 decimated the Congress with 140 seats with BJP at 161. There was a short lived Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. This was followed by United Front Government with H.D. Deve Gowda as Prime Minister supported by Congress, CPM, and CPI.

Later I.K.Gujral became Prime Minister. Elections were held fresh again in February 1998. BJP formed the government with the help of TDP, AIIDMK and Trinamool Congress, but the government had to face no-confidence motion when AIIDMK led by Jayalalita defected from the alliance. However later in the elections BJP and its alliance secured 296 seats against Congress and its allies of 134. BJP which earlier has been regarded as politically untouchable by the regional parties until the mid-1990s, the further decline of the Congress party created the conditions of the formation of BJP led government at the centre. The BJP's bid for power at the centre was facilitated by a pragmatic abandonment of its unitary ideology, but a string of defeats in state elections led the party to fall back on its hard Hindutva line.

During the five years of a BJP led government in India following 1998, relations with Pakistan were on a rollercoaster. In May 1998 India carried on five nuclear tests in the Pokran desert. Pakistan responded with six blasts in the Chagai hills of Baluchistan. The National Democratic Alliance led by Vajpayee was defeated by the United Progressive Alliance led by Congress Party in the elections of 2004. Reliant on the support of large contingent of leftist members of the Parliament, mostly from the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the UPA government was more attentive to the challenges of economic justice and social inclusion even while sustaining high rates of economic growth. India warmed up to U.S.A, with Bill Clinton visiting New Delhi in 2000. An Indo-US nuclear deal was broached in 2005 and eventually sealed in 2008. The Congress-led United Progressive Front (UPA) which assumed power in 2004 ruled for 10 years. During the Manmohan Singh government, with Sonia Gandhi as the Chairperson of UPA, India witnessed signing of major nuclear co-operation agreement with the USA, introduction of new land bill, food bill, and RTI act, however there were series of unprecedented scams (including coal Scam, 2G Spectrum scam, CWG scam, Adarsh scam, Satyam scam, and many more).

In 2014, UPA's 10 years of rule came to an end as the BJP led by Narendra Modi won decisively and formed its second NDA government. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced on July 1 2017. India created history by launching 104 satellites by ISRO's vehicle the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). On August 6, 2019, the Parliament passed a bill dividing Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories of J&K and Ladakh and also adopted a resolution scrapping special status of the state under Article 370. The massive mandate which the Bhartiya Janata Party secured in the 2019 elections under the leadership of Narendra Modi is expected to usher in a bright future for India, India's search for greatness which started in 1947, still continues, in the twenty-first century. Despite going through many vicissitudes of history, India still remains a vibrant pluralist democratic nation with its many pulsating voices.

References.

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